

Evaluation/Annual Report

1. Pg 8 Cycle 2 School Readiness Guidelines- “The Commissioners have approved spending for the first of these four years, pending evidence that the Statewide Evaluation Framework’s School Readiness Component will be fully implemented by all 58 counties, yielding desired child/family outcome data for reporting to the Commission and for sharing with First 5 stakeholders in the coming years.”

a. What does this statement mean? Is the focus that counties will commit to fully implementing the State Evaluation Framework?

Answer: The Commission has reservations about releasing continuation funds without first seeing evidence of desired outcomes for children and families. The focus is on being able to show First 5 stakeholders that SR programs are achieving desired outcomes. This will be accomplished through full implementation of the Statewide Research and Evaluation Framework, which includes: reporting accountability data, reporting outcomes and indicators data, submitting local evaluation reports, and participating in in-depth studies conducted by the Center for Results. (2/1/06)

b. What rubric and/or criteria will be used to determine whether counties are yielding desired child/family outcome data for reporting?

Answer: The criteria will be full implementation of the Statewide Research and Evaluation Framework, as detailed above in the response to question 1a. (2/1/06)

c. Is this in reference to the child and family outcomes and indicators outlined in Appendix D (p.12) of the document titled “Implementation of New Research and Evaluation Framework for School Readiness Programs” dated December 13, 2005?

Answer: Please see responses to questions 1a and 1b above. Reporting on outcomes and indicators is only one component of the SR Program evaluation. Appendix D is a preliminary list of outcomes and indicators that will be reviewed and refined/finalized once the new Statewide Research and Evaluation Contractor is in place. An earlier version appears as Appendix 5 of the Statewide Evaluation Framework, July 2005. (2/1/06)

d. What is the timeline for providing this information?

Answer: Aggregated accountability data and data on the selected outcomes and indicators will be due to the State on November 1 each year, local evaluations should be sent to the State as they are completed, and the Center for Results will determine the timeline for the in-depth studies. (2/1/06)

e. Is this in reference to future data or past data?

Answer: Data for Fiscal Year 2005/06 will be collected and reported under the current evaluation design. County Commissions must maintain their current efforts through June 30, 2006. The 2005/06 Annual Report submissions will follow the same format as the 2004/05 submissions that counties just completed. The new Framework data collection design will be in effect beginning July 1, 2006. (2/1/06)

2. Pg 14 Full Participation in the Statewide Evaluation Framework- "Data will be reported to the State in aggregate rather than at the individual participant level, using tools and templates designed by the State." When is it anticipated that the tools and templates will be available?

Answer: The State is currently developing draft tools and templates to be consistent with the Annual Report Guidelines for the new Statewide Research and Evaluation Framework. It is anticipated that they will be finalized after a new Research and Evaluation contractor is selected and begins work in Spring 2006. (2/1/06)

3. Pg 16 "Funded applications will then select at least one program outcome and corresponding indicator for each Result Area that will be reported to the State Commission." -The way this is written, it sounds as if programs only need to pick outcomes in the result areas they will be reporting to the State, not that programs must pick at least one outcome from each result area, which will then all be reported to the State. Please clarify the requirement.

Answer: The requirement will be to select at least one outcome/indicator for each Result Area, which will then be reported to the State. Programs will submit data to the State in each of the four Result Areas. The collecting and reporting of data for more than one outcome and indicator set per Result Area is strongly recommended and encouraged, as well as the submission of local evaluation results, as fuller information will provide a more complete picture of SR Program services. (2/1/06)

4. Pg 16 The RFF refers to evaluation activities conducted by the Center for Results and possible studies they may conduct. Have standard tools been designed to collect this data? Is there the possibility that the data may be asked for after the fact, i.e. after the program has been running for some time?

Answer: The Center for Results will be responsible for designing collection tools for specific research projects and for working with participants to collect any data that is not already being collected. It is possible that the Center for Results may ask for data that has already been collected after the program has been running. (2/1/06)

5. Pg 17 The RFF refers to locally funded applications being responsible for ensuring that data is available for 3 years following the end of funding. Does this refer to data collected during the program only, rather than new data for an additional 3 years? In what format must this data be available?

Answer: The requirement is that, for audit and research purposes, data collected during the program must be available for three years following the end of funding. For example, if a program operates from July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2010, the program must maintain client and other program data (collected 2006-2010) at least through June 30, 2013. There is currently no requirement about the format of the data. (2/1/06)

6. Form 7 This form asks for a lot of information that was not previously required and that can only be estimated at this point. What is the purpose of reporting on this type of information and when must programs begin reporting it?

Answer: Form 7 requests information that is consistent with the data that will be requested as part of the revised Annual Report. This type of information will be reported for accountability purposes, as described in the new Statewide Research and Evaluation Framework (adopted July 2005). It is understood that only estimates will be provided as part of the application, however, these estimates should be based on the past experience of the applying SR Program. Actual numbers will be requested and reported as part of the Annual Program and Fiscal Report process (due November 1 of each year). (2/1/06)

NOTE: *The State Commission is seeking a Technology Contractor to assist in developing a web-based reporting platform that will facilitate centralized, seamless reporting (anticipated contract start-date June 2006).*

7. Form 7 What is First 5 CA's definition of Children with Special Needs?

Answer: For Statewide Research and Evaluation purposes, children with special needs are defined as children eligible for early intervention (Early Start) and/or related services under Part C of IDEA (children under 3 years of age), children eligible for preschool special education and/or related services under Part B (619) of IDEA, and/or children with a mental health diagnosis. The First 5 Special Needs Project uses a broader definition. (2/1/06)

8. Form 7 What are examples of "other family members" that may be served through a School Readiness program i.e., children older than age 5, uncles, aunts, etc.?

Answer: Children 0-5 are the primary focus of First 5 services, supports, and funds. Services for "other family members" must be provided with the clearly articulated intent and expectation that there will be a subsequent benefit to and impact on children 0-5. Other family members include siblings age 6 or older (as long as the family has at least one child aged 0-5), and adults (other than service providers* who are not primary caregivers, but who participate with children in First 5 activities). (2/1/06)

***Providers** are health, social service, educational or other providers that provide services to pregnant women and/or to children ages 0-5 and their families in the SR community, whose services promote the identified First 5 Result Areas, and who participate in First 5 training or support programs, in order to strengthen their capacity to better serve the First 5 target audience. (2/1/06)

9. Form 7 Will programs be asked to report new, continuing and enhanced clients served for the fiscal year? If yes, on what form will those numbers be reported and what is First 5 CA definition of a Continuing Client?

Answer: No, please see RFF Form 7 for details on the types of client information to be reported in Cycle 2 of the SR Program. It is consistent with First 5 Annual Report expectations. (2/1/06)

10. Can you clarify the requirement for local evaluation reports? Will there be a standard reporting format or technical assistance to complete these?

Answer: The submission of local evaluation reports is critically important to the continuation of the SR program. The State must be able to document that the programs are producing desired outcomes for children and families in order to secure future funding. The data that are being collected from the accountability reporting and outcomes and indicators will not be sufficient to entirely demonstrate what programs are accomplishing, so local program evaluations will be necessary to complete the picture. (See also the response to question #1). There is currently not a standard format for these reports, but the new Research and Evaluation contractor will provide technical assistance in preparing them. (2/1/06)

11. If an SR Program is not reapplying until 2007/2008, what is the evaluation commitment?

Answer: Effective July 1, 2006, all funded SR Programs must comply with the new Statewide Research and Evaluation Framework. This includes the selection and tracking of at least one outcome per Statewide Evaluation Result Area. Also refer to Question 3.

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Fiscal

1. Pg 4 & 8 Funding Level-the guidelines state that Cycle 2 allocations will remain the same as Cycle 1 allocations and that at the end of four years, unspent funds will no longer be available to County Commissions. We understood, that we would be able to use these funds in Year 5 and would not be forfeiting that money. Please clarify what will happen with these funds.

Answer: Cycle 1 funding was an allocation available to County Commissions for four years of SR Program implementation. The State later authorized spending into a fifth year in cases where start-up challenges delayed early SR Program activities. Cycle 2 is also an allocation available to County Commissions for four years of SR Program implementation. However, now that SR Programs have had time to stabilize, the annual budget and expenditures of State funds for each program should be consistent. All applying programs will be funded for four years in four equal annual amounts, based on the State Fiscal Year of July 1 – June 30. If a program has unspent Cycle 1 funds already disbursed to the Program at the time of reapplication for Cycle 2 funds, they will use them in Year 1 of Cycle 2 funding as part of but not in addition to the Cycle 2 allocation. The Cycle 1 funds unspent at the beginning of the first fiscal year of Cycle 2 funding will be maintained by First 5 California and later made available for respective County Commission use at the close of Cycle 2 funding, unless the State Commission approves spending for a Cycle 3 of SR Program funding. If the State Commission approves spending for a Cycle 3 of SR Program funding, any unspent Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 funds will no longer be available to County Commissions (*Pending State Commission approval to spend Cycle 1 funds at the close of Cycle 2*). This is a transition to an annualized budget. (2/1/06)

2. Pg 8 Funding Level-The RFF states that county allocations will be based upon past spending patterns. We feel that you should consider the last two years of the 4-year funding cycle, as some counties had a challenging start-up period, but have been spending consistently in the final years of their award.

Answer: County allocations are a guideline for use in funding decisions made by First 5 California. Past spending patterns serve as another guideline, used to help determine appropriate funding levels. These past patterns will be used to assess future funding needs between Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 of SR Program funding. The last two years of Cycle 1 spending will be taken into account as well. However, if a county has consistently under spent, during each of its Cycle 1 SR Program years, any increase in spending must be fully justified in the response to the RFF. (2/1/06)

3. Pg 8 Funding Level-It is not clear from this section whether it is permissible to increase funding for specific programs if they expand and/or enhance their programs and thus increase the children/families to be served.

Answer: It is permissible to increase funding for expanding programs if all Program Expansion parameters are met. Please see Pg 12 of the RFF for a description of the Program Expansion parameters. (2/1/06)

4. Pg 9 Match Requirement-County Commissions are required to expend at least \$1 in local cash match for every \$1 spent of State CCFC funds per fiscal year..." The requirement that the \$1 for \$1 match be balanced each fiscal year is a difficult one. Even with the best planning and budget projection, expenditures will not be exactly as originally anticipated. Thus, the projection for exactly what the state would be paying for and exactly what the county would be paying for are never exactly correct. This, then, causes complications in the \$1 for \$1 match each fiscal year. An arrangement in which the match could be a few percentage points off each year, to be totally balanced the last year, would be much more practical.

Answer: County Commissions are required to expend at least \$1 in local cash match for every \$1 spent of State CCFC funds per fiscal year, in an effort to stabilize annual funding for local SR Programs and thereby stabilize services and supports available to children 0-5 and their families on an annual basis. Typically, accounting staff can make these year-end adjustments to achieve the appropriate local match. Planning a budget with a higher local match is another possible strategy. (2/1/06)

5. Pg 9 Match Requirement "Only funds serving and solely supporting children 0-5 and their families can be considered as part of the required match." This is not quite clear. Do funds used for staff, classroom space, staff training, food for the children, books, copy paper, etc. meet this match requirement as long as they benefit children 0-5 and their families?

Answer: Yes, First 5 County and State Commission funds, as well as other dedicated local partner funds, used for staff, space, training, books, copy paper, and other items in the provision of services and supports for children 0-5 and their families meet this requirement. However, First 5 funds may not be used for food items to nourish program participants. Childcare and education centers and other care providers (e.g., families, friends, and neighbors) can receive reimbursement through programs such as the Childcare Food Program and other private partners. (2/1/06)

6. Pg 18 The RFF refers to the Financial Management Guide provided by GFOA. The RFF is not requesting anything specific to these guidelines so we are unsure of why it is mentioned. Can you please clarify?

Answer: County Commissions and funded SR Programs are requested to use Financial Management Guide terms and definitions when reporting to or communicating with the State regarding the SR Program. Additionally, the expenditure classifications included on Form 5, are contained in the GFOA guide and should be used by County Commissions when completing the form. (2/1/06)

7. Pg 18 Parameters for Use of County Coordination Funds-"The annual amount of available County Coordination Funds will remain based on the established county allocation (Attachment 8) and must be requested in four equal annual amounts." Because the grants are funded in 3 cycles, coordination funds will be needed through 6 months beyond the end of the last cycle. This means that 4 equal annual amounts will not work, as the funds will need to be spread through 6.5 years.

Answer: County Commissions must draw down the funds in 4 equal annual amounts during the four years of Cycle 2 participation but may apply them and report their use across the time span during which their programs are funded, to November 1 of the fiscal year following the last year of SR Program funding in Cycle 2 (i.e., 4 months following the end of SR Program funding in Cycle 2). If a Cycle 3 is funded by the State, once the program begins Cycle 3 funding, Cycle 2 County Coordination Funds will no longer be available. (2/1/06)

8. Pg 18 County Coordination Funds-Is the amount of these funds comparable to the implementation funds of the past (for our county, \$25,000)? Can we use that amount to prepare the budget for these funds?

Answer: Yes, the County Coordination Funds allocation will be the same as the Implementation Funds allocation provided in the past. Refer to the RFF for parameters for the reporting and use of these funds. Cycle 2 County Coordination Funds may be used starting on the effective date that the County begins Cycle 2 funded SR Programs. Refer to Attachment 8 for a copy of the County Allocation Table. (2/1/06)

9. Pg 18 Parameters on Use of County Coordination Funds—"In accepting County Coordination funds, counties are reaffirming a commitment to effectively monitor local programs, submit timely and accurate reports, and fully participate in the statewide evaluation process. Failure to maintain these commitments will result in a reduction in the amount of County Coordination Funds provided by First 5 California." The requirements for monitoring, reports, and evaluation have not yet been fully specified, thus counties are committing without full information about what will be required.

Answer: County Commissions are expected to complete typical program accountability activities (e.g., adherence to First 5 California and SR Program RFF policies, timely and accurate reporting, ensuring that applicable licensing guidelines are met, etc.) as described in the SR Program RFF. Additional expectations are specified in the Statewide Research and Evaluation Framework and Guidebook. (2/1/06)

10. Pg 19 Unspent Cycle 1 Implementation Funds--If we have unspent implementation funds from the first cycle of funding that have already been disbursed to us, what will happen to that funding if we are to apply for the Cycle 2 funds? Will that money roll in to the second cycle county coordination funds and would we only then receive the balance of what has been allocated to our county?

Answer: "Once a County Commission has applied for Cycle 2 Funds, Cycle 1 Implementation Funds will no longer be available for disbursement." If all of a County Commission's SR Programs have concluded Cycle 1 funding and programming, and are all to reapply for Cycle 2 funding, any remaining Cycle 1 Implementation Funds will no longer be available to the County Commission and any disbursed Cycle 1 Implementation Funds not spent during Cycle 1 of the SR Program(s) will, in effect, become Cycle 2 County Coordination Funds; as the first disbursement of Cycle 2 County Coordination Funds will be reduced by the amount of the disbursed, unspent Cycle 1 Implementation Funds. Some counties will have Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 programs operating concurrently, these counties will have both Implementation and County Coordination funds available to them. Guidelines for accessing these funds remain the same.

11. Pg 20 Small County Augmentation Project-Is this something similar to Small County Augmentation Funds that are already in place? Can you give us a general idea of what this is and how it will impact the application process?

Answer: Yes, please refer to RFF Pg 20 for a description of the Project, Attachment 9 for a listing of the 27 largest counties that will provide funding, and Form 11 (to be completed by the 27 largest counties only) to select a payment option. (2/1/06)

12. Pg 21 Annual SR Program and Fiscal Report Submission -“The use of unspent SR Program funds from year to year of Cycle 2 must be fully justified by the County/Program and approved prior by the State prior to use. What will the full justification entail?

Answer: The justification and approval process for the use of unspent SR Program funds from year to year of Cycle 2 will be described in the revised fiscal report package to be released in Spring 2006. It will be consistent with the process used in Cycle 1. Refer to the Cycle 1 RFF (updated March 2002) available on the First 5 California website at www.ccfc.ca.gov/schoolready1.htm.

13. Pg 24 Reporting and Program Compliance with State Fiscal, Program, and Evaluation Policy-“The following steps will be taken in cases where Counties fail to submit timely and accurate reports for their funded SR Programs.” Please include commitments in these provisions as to how long the state will take to review and provide feedback about the submitted documents, so that they can be corrected and approved by the due dates.

Answer: Reports are due to First 5 California November 1. Typically, First 5 California would complete its review by January 31. If any corrections are needed, the County would be notified and disbursements would be delayed. If the County provides accurate reports in a timely manner, the chance of becoming out of compliance is low. (2/1/06)

14. Form 5 Budget by Expenditure Classification--The line items required in this document do not match the line items currently used by our County and our funded programs. Can we use the line items currently being used in our County/funded programs?

Answer: No, please complete Form 5 as indicated, using the standard expenditure classifications described therein (these are contained in the Government Finance Officers Association, Financial Management Guide). Please also provide a narrative document describing the information contained in the completed form; the narrative should be no longer than two pages in length. Please establish accounting procedures and report expenditures in these classifications, providing expenditure detail in each category. (2/1/06)

15. Form 6 County Coordination Funds-A separate narrative document is required. Should this be included as an appendix? What is the page limit for the narrative document?

Answer: This narrative should be included along with a completed Form 6 from the RFF and should be no longer than two pages in length, see RFF Pg 22 for a sample narrative. (2/1/06)

16. Our County Commission plans to apply for First 5 California Power of Preschool (PoP) funds, if we are awarded these funds, can they be considered match for the SR Program?

Answer: No, PoP funds cannot be considered as match for the SR Program. Acceptable sources of County Cash Matching Funds include: County Commission funds, dedicated expenditures by school districts and local public agencies specifically targeted to an element of and in coordination with the SR Program, and similarly dedicated funds from private sources such as foundations and businesses. Additionally, local match used for one state/county jointly funded program (e.g., PoP) may not be used as local match for another state/county jointly funded program (e.g., SR).

17. Pg 4 describes the option of completing a fifth year of Cycle 1 SR Programming if a program has sufficient funds to do so. May a Cycle 1 SR Program complete a sixth year if sufficient funds are available?

Answer: No, programs may not extend Cycle 1 SR Program activities and funds to support a sixth year of program.

18. The RFF indicates that expansion is acceptable in Cycle 2, how can expansion be achieved if no additional funding is provided?

Answer: Expansion in Cycle 2 may be achieved via at least two avenues: 1) numerous Cycle 1 SR Programs incurred significant one-time start up costs not required for ongoing operations during Cycle 2. These funds should now be available for other uses such as expansion; and 2) SR Programs can secure additional local partners to provide expansion resources.

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19. Form 7 includes a Service Level Certification at the bottom. Do all applying SR Programs complete this form?

Answer: No, all applying programs must complete the total estimated numbers to be served section of Form 7, while only County Commissions with fifth year Cycle 1 programs (see RFF Pg 4) and the 27 largest counties funding the Small County Augmentation Project (see RFF Pg 20) are required to complete the Service Level Certification.

Program

1. Pg 11 The RFF describes the communities to be served as those with schools with API's 1-3. In the past, schools with API's 4-5 were also eligible based on demonstrated need. In the past it seems that 20% of State funds could go toward work in these areas. Is this still true? Please address this, as well as the ability to use local funds for activities in school communities with API's over 3.

Answer: The Cycle 1 SR Program RFF (updated March 2002) indicated, "approximately 20% of State CCFC funds could be used for...schools participating in the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program or Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (i.e., schools with API scores in deciles 4-5) if a county chooses" (Pg 15). This remains true in Cycle 2 of SR Program Funding. Furthermore, if a Cycle 1 SR Program that met API 1-3 criteria has now advanced to API 4-5, there is a maintenance of effort requirement to sustain the service levels for that community in Cycle 2. County Commissions may further expand SR activities to school communities with API scores over 3 using local funds only, beyond those local funds used to match State SR Program funds. (2/1/06)

2. Pg 26 Application Review Process-The review process for the applications is not discussed in the RFF. How will the counties be involved in this process?

Answer: "First 5 California staff will conduct the application review and approval process (Pg 26)." While County Commission staff will not be directly involved in the review and approval process, they will be engaged with State Commission staff in the process of refining proposed programs or applications as appropriate. (2/1/06)

3. Pg 26 Needs Assessments-Our program is continuing, with no major and very few minor changes. Must we complete an entirely new needs assessment process?

Answer: No, programs that will continue core Cycle 1 practices and activities into Cycle 2 do not need to complete entirely new needs assessment processes. However, they must indicate the relationship between their selected Cycle 2 practices and activities and their original need assessment process; and provide updates to the needs assessment. Applications must address the role of parents and other caregivers of children 0-5 in the needs assessment process. (2/1/06)

4. Pg 26 Page Limits-Are application page limits for the program narrative for each individual SR program or for the entire county SR program?

Answer: In cases where a County Commission funds several SR Programs, page limits for the program narrative are applicable to each individual SR Program. In cases where a County Commission funds/operates a system-wide SR Program, the page limit is applicable to the system-wide SR Program. (2/1/06)

5. Pg 27 Expansion is described as requiring no change or reduction in the level and amount of services already in an SR community. Can this be further detailed? In our case, we may not need to put SR dollars into past activities; however, those programs are still functioning through other funds. We'd prefer to use the SR dollars to expand our work while the existing activities continue on their own.

Answer: The expectation is that the First 5 County Commission maintains service levels and achieves child/family outcomes in formal partnership with other entities. Please refer to RFF Pg 11-12 for a discussion of the maintenance of effort and expansion requirements. (2/1/06)

6. Form 3 Logic models-Are these submitted for each SR program or combined for the County?

Answer: Logic models are to be completed on an individual SR Program (per application) level (or system-wide in cases where a County Commission funds/operates a system-wide SR Program). For each SR Program (or system), provide one logic model per Statewide Evaluation Result Area (i.e., one each for Child Development, Family Functioning, Health, and Systems of Care). (2/1/06)

7. We have some forms that we already use in our programs, these forms contain some of the information requested in the RFF, may we use these forms in lieu of those included in the RFF when appropriate?

Answer: No, to help keep the review process consistent and to make information easy to find, please use the forms provided in the RFF and add county/program specific information to them if that is helpful locally. For example, in the case of the Logic Model (Form 3), use the RFF form/chart (Pg 29) and add county/program specific information in additional columns to the right. That will enable reviewers to move smoothly through the review and enable the county/program to combine information and only have to complete it once. (2/1/06)

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8. In our county, in the past years, the SR funds supported additional preschool spaces at a center –based program on the grounds of our lowest performing school. This year we (First 5) wrote an Even Start grant to move the preschool under this program and add literacy services for our parents. Our County was awarded the grant and the preschool costs are now covered under this project. The preschool continues to serve our target families and children. However, we were not allowed to receive the money directly into our account since we are considered a government agency. For the purposes of the application, can we consider the grant money to be match money (since it continues to support our School Readiness program and our target population)? And can the Even Start program be considered a collaborative partner?

Answer: Yes, if documentation is provided to demonstrate that the spaces are dedicated to the First 5 SR effort and are supported with dedicated local cash match for the SR Program (e.g., for young children 0-5). Yes, Even Start can be considered a collaborative partner. (2/1/06)

9. Our major partner has decided not to continue with the SR Program into Cycle 2, they are a major player in the community and will be difficult to replace. Do we have to remain in that community or can we seek other priority communities to serve?

Answer: Any exceptions to the maintenance of effort requirement must be fully described and justified in the application; the description and justification must fully address program modifications and/or expansion. Additionally, the description and justification must fully describe efforts made to meet the maintenance of effort requirement prior to the submission of an exception request. This includes the summarized documentation of:

1. The number and types of meetings convened to devise approaches to continue work in existing SR school communities with existing partners (i.e., to prevent schools/school districts, community-based organizations, and other partners from withdrawing participation from First 5's SR Program), also address the level of agency personnel involved in these meetings (e.g., County Commission Executive Director, District Superintendent, etc.);
2. The number and types of meetings convened to secure alternate partners in existing SR school communities (i.e., to ensure that young children and their families in existing SR school communities continue to receive SR services if existing partners withdraw participation from First 5's SR Program), also address the level of agency personnel involved in these meetings (e.g., County Commission Executive Director, District Superintendent, Community Based Organization Executive Director, etc.);
3. The outcome(s) of all related meetings;

4. Need assessments completed in and with alternate communities (must address the involvement of young children and their families in determining community need); and
5. The ability of the new proposed partner(s) to comply with all existing and new First 5 SR Program requirements (described in the Refining for Results-Request for Funding document (released February 2006)).

This documentation should not exceed two to four pages in length and should be noted and included in the application as an attachment.

10. If the Preschool for All initiative is passed on the June 2006 ballot, will the funding from PFA replace local funding of preschool spaces? Knowing the answer to this question will assist us in designing our program.

Answer: If the PFA Ballot Initiative passes in June, funding will likely be available to replace First 5 funding for preschool spaces in the future, however County Commissions should delay moving funding until it is clear that replacement funds are available. It is important to plan for the potential change in a way that supports ongoing preschool services for children and does not reduce current funding before the new funding stream is operational. (2/1/06)

11. How will applications be rated during the review process?

Answer: Applications will be reviewed and assigned the following ratings: Approve as submitted, approve with modifications, and approve with significant changes. County Commissions submitting applications that require modifications and/or significant changes will submit requested modifications and/or changes to First 5 California within 30 days of the request. Failure to meet this timeline will result in a delayed disbursement to the County Commission for the impacted application(s).

12. What if an application is not submitted by the deadline?

Answer: Applications not received by the deadline, will be reviewed following the completion of the review process for those received by the published deadlines (see RFF Pg 3). These applications will then be reviewed in the order received; the applying programs will not receive funds until the applications are approved.

13. How can County Commissions and their funded SR Programs assure a maintenance of effort without increased funding in Cycle 2?

Answer: Cycle 2 SR Programs will operate with the benefit of at least four years of stable Cycle 1 funding. It is expected that solid County Commission and local partner collaborations can together absorb the costs needed to adhere to the RFF's maintenance of effort policy (see RFF Pg 11).

14. Our County Commission funds SR Programs that serve over 100 children annually in a four-day a week SR program, which includes preschool. We anticipate receiving funds to support a State Preschool, as well as Preschool For All Initiative funds (assuming approval of the Initiative). Can we use these resources to provide the SR Program's required early care and education services and use SR Program dollars to expand other direct services for our preschoolers (e.g., Speech, Language and Behavior Services for at-risk children, Parent Education and Screenings, etc.)?

Answer: Yes, County Commissions may integrate State Preschool and PFA Initiative (assuming approval of the Initiative) funded preschool spaces as part of their SR Program(s) and may redirect funds previously used to provide preschool spaces to other aspects of the SR Program. However, the SR Programs must continue to provide a full complement of SR services in each of the identified Result Areas (see RFF Pg 11), to children 0-5 and their families.

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15. The RFF requires the implementation of evidence-based practices. Given that the implementation of these practices may cost more than practices we selected in Cycle 1 and with no additional funding, we anticipate that our numbers served will have to decrease, how should we communicate this in the application process?

Answer: Major changes, including decreases in the estimated numbers to be served, must be fully described in the Explanation of Changes and Rationale section of the RFF (see RFF Pg 27) and on Form 2. Additionally, the relationship between the proposed changes and the assessment of community needs must be evident (see RFF Pg 26). There should be an appropriate rationale for the selection criteria used to determine the specific children/families who will be served. Finally, the program description (see RFF Pg 27) must fully describe the proposed evidence-based practices and estimated numbers to be served.

16. One of our County Commission's funded SR Programs currently requires significant changes. The program is scheduled to reapply in 2007/2008. Can we reapply "early" (prior to its anticipated Cycle 1 end) for this SR Program and use the reapplication time, up to April 3, 2006, to redesign the program?

Answer: Yes, SR Programs may apply prior to their anticipated reapplication dates. These programs must fully comply with stated RFF policies and guidelines. As described on RFF Pg 4, unspent Cycle 1 funds may be available at the close of Cycle 2 (see also the response to Fiscal question #1 above).